



Volume 29 No. 1 January 2001

# FIREFIGHTER

## Merseyside: we are determined to win



## GENERAL SECRETARY

# WE WILL FIGHT FOR

BY THE TIME this edition of Firefighter hits the Stations and Control Rooms we will know the result of the Ballot for industrial action on Merseyside. It is depressing to have been pushed into this so soon after the very positive outcome of the Burchill Inquiry.

The Chief Fire Officer acting for the Fire Authority is refusing to conduct industrial relations in a modern or constructive manner, or even in the spirit of recently agreed discussions with the FBU. Further, he is continually attempting to impose a number of adverse changes to Conditions of Service.

Remember the run-up to Burchill? Remember the Employers telling us that they would never try to impose changes at Brigade level without the agreement of the FBU and our members? It is our belief that the Employers and CACFOA are also less than happy to witness the Chief Fire Officer "doing his own thing" on behalf of the Fire Authority. He is something of a rogue elephant! His brand of industrial relations belongs in the dark ages. The other parties, the FBU included, who accepted Burchill are giving it their best shot but the CFO of Merseyside with the knowledge and support of the Fire Authority has rejected this opportunity to move forward. He claims to be committed to fairness and equality in the workplace but his actions are anything but fair, he also needs to comprehend that believing in Equality means you try to treat people as equals. He certainly does not respect the firefighters and control operators of Merseyside. He treats them with derision not dignity.

There is a great deal of positive work being done in the CFBAC and on the NJC but this is overshadowed by the mess in Merseyside. What is the point in trying to reach negotiated agreements if they are simply going to be ignored?

The Government, the Employers and Fire Service Management know where they stand with the FBU and our members. We will fight to ensure that all our members are treated fairly at work. This means that sometimes we have to be very tough. We are, however also honest and open in our approach – and we keep our word!

### GENERAL ELECTION YEAR

We are now in a pre-general election period. For the first time a Labour Government commands widespread respect for its competent handling of the economy. The public services are bene-



**This is an issue of fairness.**

**This is an issue of democracy.**

**It is an issue we are  
determined to win.**

fiting from this. We however still want New Labour to go further faster on most issues – not least pensions, the national minimum wage and employment rights – but they have made a good start.

Nevertheless this will not prevent us from pushing our points home about a strategy for funding our public services properly. We were right to do this when expenditure was frozen at the level set by the Tories after New Labour took office. We make no apologies for our constructive criticism.

The role of trade unions is to defend workers from exploitation



# FIREFIGHTER

Volume 29 No. 1 January 2001

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## CONTROL ROOMS

# FAIRNESS

– and make no mistake, there is still plenty of exploitation; unsafe working conditions, long hours, low pay, discrimination – these, like the poor, are still with us. Ours is the collective voice of workers, in our own industries and at national and international level through the TUC. There are seven million trade unionists in the UK and we will make sure we are heard. The existence of free trade unions is essential to any society that calls itself a democracy. If trade unions are crushed then fascism or totalitarianism will flourish.

In 1986 former Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson said

*"The TUC has arrived. It is an estate of the realm, as real, as potent, as essentially part of the fabric of our national life as any of the historic estates"*

In 1979 Margaret Thatcher set about changing this by instigating a pincer movement of high unemployment and restrictive legislation against trade unions. Our numbers fell from 13 million to six million. However we have come through those dark days – so in essence of Mr. Wilson's words are true. The lesson for us must be

- Organise the unorganised
- Educate the membership on why we are here – no Employer ever "gives" us anything!
- Encourage maximum participation in the life of the union
- Explain why Solidarity is so important in protecting members' interests

Our members on Merseyside are being badly treated. This could be you! If the ballot for industrial action is carried, as it will be, then members will have voted for continuous action. The Chief and the Fire Authority have so far ignored all overtures to broker peace – sadly it seems nothing else will concentrate their minds. We are acutely conscious of our duty to the public but they are not best served by the Chief's maverick approach to the firefighters and control operators of Merseyside, sanctioned by the Fire Authority. We are hoping that common sense will prevail but if it doesn't then our fellow members deserve nothing less than our wholehearted support.

This is an issue of fairness. This is an issue of democracy. It is an issue we are determined to win.

**Andy Gilchrist**  
General Secretary



F B U C O N F I D E N T I A L F R E E P H O N E H E L P L I N E

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FAIRNESS AT WORK is about treating others as we would wish to be treated ourselves – with respect

# We must resist, with action if necessary

**Tam Tierney**

**Regional Secretary – Region 1**

I'M SURE I'm correct in saying that our Conference has agreed policies against joint/shared Control Rooms. I'm also sure that the Control Staff National Committee has passed resolutions advising against joint/shared Control Rooms.

Everyone agree? Good. So that's it, we have policies.

Well we must have, especially given that I heard our General Secretary, Andy Gilchrist, successfully move a resolution at the TUC condemning these new-style Control Rooms. In the light of the Home Office report into joint/shared Control Rooms it was vital that we made sure that we had policies prepared to deal with any attacks by management on this front. In fact, Andy even said that any such proposals would be met with strong resistance and strike action if necessary. Nice one Andy!

The proof of Andy's commitment is shown in the article in November's *Fire* magazine.

So how come, in the same journal, much praise is heaped on the forthcoming Joint Control in Wiltshire? Police, Fire and Ambulance all in the one Control. Fire Brigade Headquarters will be moving into the same building by 2004. What's happening?

I remember, years ago, a fraternal delegate from Sweden – on addressing our Conference – praised the FBU for its radical stance on many issues and the forward-looking policies we continually adopt. Has someone, somewhere – and I don't mean a CACFOA member – decided that our policy on joint/shared Controls isn't forward looking, is too difficult to maintain or just doesn't matter?

I'm sure that we all love attending Annual Conference and that most of us come away "fired-up" by the decisions we have made during our few days in Bridlington. There seems precious little point in having a Conference at all if we can't maintain the policies adopted by the delegates.

As Andy said at the TUC, this move against Control Rooms will cause hundreds of jobs to disappear, increase attendance times, reduce Health and Safety standards for fire crews and as usual, cost lives. This is about nothing other than saving money, possibly called "Best Value" and every FBU member should resist it – by strike action if necessary.

**PS. On the subject of Best Value, members would be well advised to read the Editorial in the same November edition of *Fire* magazine.**

## CONTROL MERGER NOTICE BOARD

### FBU DENOUNCES JOINT SERVICE CONTROL ROOMS

The Fire Brigades Union has stated that it is totally opposed to any merger of emergency Fire Controls. The FBU Executive Council has unanimously supported a call to maintain the status quo of one emergency Fire Control per Brigade.

Andy Gilchrist, FBU General Secretary, while moving against mergers at the TUC Congress in Glasgow, said: "These proposals are purely about saving money. Saving money does not necessarily mean saving lives. There is no benefit to the public, to Control staff or to firefighters in the proposals to merge emergency Fire Controls. On the contrary, if the proposals are allowed to go ahead it will mean a worse service to the public, a loss of hundreds of Control Operators' jobs and a reduction in health and safety for the country's firefighters."

The FBU position is that all proposals to merge or regionalise emergency Fire Controls will be met with resistance and strike action if necessary.

Fire Magazine

 This Branch unanimously opposes all proposals to amalgamate or merge Fire Controls.

These cost cutting measures will result in the loss of local knowledge, specialist skills, increased turnout times and a poorer service for the communities we serve.

We remind the employers of the standing FBU Resolution, ensuring that should any FBU member be made compulsorily redundant, a recall Conference with a recommendation to ballot for strike action will immediately commence.

CASTLEMILK BRANCH  
STRATHCLYDE

 This Branch supports Control Staff in their fight against regionalisation and amalgamation of Control Rooms.

We call upon the Brigade Committee for their support in whatever form it deems necessary to prevent the introduction of the proposals contained in the report "The Future of Fire Service Control Rooms and Communications".

Carried Unanimously

ST. HELENS BRANCH

 In light of the recent report and the recommendation of amalgamation and mergers of Control Rooms, this Brigade Committee opposes such recommendations and calls for a ballot for industrial action if steps are made to implement these changes on Merseyside.

Carried Unanimously

Proposed by CROSBY

Seconded by LONGMOOR LANE

 This Brigade Committee supports Control in their fight against regionalisation and calls upon the Brigade Committee to pledge their support in whatever form it deems necessary.

Carried Unanimously

Proposed by FORMBY

Seconded by BUCKLEY HILL

## PEACE AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT



GERY McCANN/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

**Members of CND and other nuclear weapons protesters march through Glasgow in a march against Trident nuclear missile submarines sponsored by the Scottish TUC**

# Britain has key role in new nuclear arms race

THE end of the cold war has meant a serious reorientation of the threat to peace in the world. The role nuclear weapons play in world politics has changed, but it remains as profound and as damaging as ever since the security doctrines of all states with nuclear weapons are still based on deterrence theory. The role Britain plays in this process is pivotal and tragically it has not been one aimed at reducing tension. The deployment of the Trident submarine based nuclear weapons system was sited by a number of states as proof of a lack of commitment by the nuclear powers to working to get rid of nuclear weapons, as they committed themselves to do in the 1970 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). And there have been a number of other incidents where our Government has obstructed disarmament initiatives.

While it is now unlikely that there will be an all out global nuclear war, devastating all life on earth, in the way which could clearly have happened in the 1980s, the use of nuclear weapons in regional conflicts is now much more likely with the open deployment of such weapons by a number of states throughout the world. Although the end of the cold war made the world a

safer place in many respects, there remains a potent threat to peace in the world and nuclear weapons are a major part of that.

The US is currently planning to deploy National Missile Defence (NMD) and Theatre Missile Defence (TMD) systems, which will enhance the US first-strike capability and make nuclear conflict more likely. If they do, it will break the 1972 ABM treaty, which is generally recognised as a cornerstone of international moves towards nuclear disarmament. The US military industrial establishment is committed to NMD and TMD and the fact that the systems do not work will not diminish the harm they will do to international politics. A new nuclear arms race will be the result of any deployment of NMD or TMD. The Star Wars programme in the 1980s and 90s for instance, did not work, but the fact that the US, with Regan in the White House, continued its development, was very damaging.

The final decision on these systems will be taken by President Bush, but what Britain does will be very important to that

**continued over page**

# PEACE AND THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT

## from previous page

decision. NMD requires a radar station in Europe, which is why the US will want to use the Fylingdales base in North Yorkshire. The only Government in Europe that is at all sympathetic to the US move is our own. In every single war in recent years the first target has been radar stations. Yet Britain would not be covered by the defensive shield the system is supposed to represent. Making it politically impossible for the British Government to allow the US to use Fylingdales is clearly a priority for stopping the deployment of NMD.

There are therefore, important issues which make both CND and TUCND very relevant to Britain's politics and especially so for trade unionists. Weapons and their manufacture are a central part of the British economy, in some very damaging ways. What happens to the defence industry has a knock on effect on the rest of the economy and our social services.

CND and TUCND have themselves evolved and adapted to

face the new scenario. TUCND began life as a specialist section within CND and has now become a separate body, but still concentrating on working in the trade union movement. The move makes it possible for TUCND to be that much more the possession of the trade union movement, with its policy defined directly by the affiliates and it decided some time ago to move to being a general peace organisation, covering a range of issues as well as nuclear weapons. CND on the other hand concentrates its resources on nuclear issues and campaigns locally, nationally and internationally through actions, lobbying and education work. TUCND aims to persuade union branches to affiliate to it, while CND primarily aims to have individuals join it. This makes sense given the nature of politics in Britain and the position of the trade union movement on the political landscape.

Therefore, this appeal is for your branch to affiliate to TUCND and for its members to join CND individually.

**JIMMY BARNES, Secretary TUCND**

**DAVE KNIGHT, Chair CND**

## Stop the new nuclear arms race

The United States military-industrial establishment is committed to National and Theatre Missile Defence (NMD/TMD). This will enhance US first-strike capability and make nuclear war more likely. Russia, China, then India and Pakistan will respond with increases to their nuclear arsenals. **A new nuclear arms race will be in full swing.**

Britain has, with Trident, its most 'powerful' nuclear weapons system ever, yet is working with the US to enhance the system. Britain also retains its first-use policy.

If you do not want a nuclear free-for-all – **join CND.**

Please fill in form below or ring our membership and donation hotline to pay by credit card – **020 7700 2393**

I wish to join CND

Membership rates: £26 household; £21 waged individual; £12 low-waged; £8 pensioner; £8 unwaged; £6 student; £6 youth

I wish to donate £100  £50  £25 other £\_\_\_\_\_

I enclose a cheque for £\_\_\_\_\_ payable to CND

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



Please return coupon to: **Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament**, Freepost, 162 Holloway Rd, London N7 8BR

**United States National  
Missile Defence requires a  
radar station in Europe,  
which is why the US will  
want to use the Fylingdales  
base in North Yorkshire.**

**The only Government in  
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**In every single war in recent  
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**Yet Britain would not be  
covered by the defensive  
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## AGE OF CONSENT – EQUALITY BEFORE THE LAW

# Fair and just

### PAT CARBERRY

#### **Chair, National Gay and Lesbian Committee**

DECEMBER 2000 finally saw Tony Blair take the extraordinary step to address the inequality in the law concerning age of consent for all, regardless of sexuality. This political football has been bounced around between the Commons and the House of Lords for far too long with the very basic premise of the issue being lost in the moral argument raising the question “is a teenager of 16, old enough and mature enough to decide if they are ready to have sexual relations with someone of the same sex?”

This is a question I cannot answer, but seems to be the main argument on the reducing of the age of consent for same sex relationships from 18 to 16. What I am convinced of is that for the law to be applied in such a way that for a teenager of 16 to be deemed sufficiently mature to make the decision to legally have a sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex, but to have a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex would make them a criminal, is clearly discrimination on the grounds of sexuality.

Hypothetically, why not apply the law across the board on the same grounds and see how it would be fair and just.

For a heterosexual you can legally enjoy a pint of beer in your local pub at 18, but for homosexuals it must be extended two years and they can't have a drink until they are 20. At 17 the heterosexual individual would enjoy the legal entitlement to take his driving test and drive a car, but for the homosexual individual legally, they would not be ready for that responsibility until they were 19. Of course this all sounds silly, yet this is how the law was

being applied in terms of age of consent.

This is not an issue of when a teenager has the maturity to make the decision of if they are ready to engage in sexual relations, but one of equality before the law. In a society that welcomes diversity, the law cannot be permitted to discriminate on an element of that society on the issue of rights, which the visible majority are entitled to legally enjoy.

The reporting in the tabloid press on this issue has been very

negative and once again on the moral argument. Statements about elderly men preying on 16-year-old boys have been made, but no mention of the fact that the law would permit the same individuals to prey on 16-year-old girls. The press also make mention of the gay equal rights group demanding the age of consent being reduced to 14. There is one group calling for this, which is Outrage. Outrage are a small part of the gay equality movement and the vast majority believe that 16 should be the minimum age and that protection of vulnerable youth be the priority in the debate on age of consent.

It was 1967 that the law changed to decriminalise homosexuality, yet it has



**Terry Richardson and Pat Carberry at the Rank Outsiders dinner last summer with Steve Norris Conservative candidate for Mayor of London and Liberal Democrat leader Charles Kennedy. The dinner celebrated the final lifting of the policy banning lesbian and gay personnel from careers in the armed services. The dinner also celebrated nine years of campaigning and the welfare work undertaken by the Rank Outsiders organisation in support of all those affected by the policy.**

taken 33 years to make the law equal. It's not the end of the world as the moral sector would claim, but an advancement in the understanding that if we are to acknowledge the benefits of diversity, then we cannot eliminate sectors of society because we don't like the idea of what they do, which in reality is not so different from what the perceived majority do. The action of the Prime Minister is to be celebrated and applauded and hopefully you as a reader will see this decision for what it is, fair and just.

## THEMATIC REVIEW

# Whatever happened to the thematic review?



**Tennyson Turney**  
Brigade Chair  
(Region 10)

THOSE of you who are old enough would have remembered the Thematic Review on Equality and Fairness (a distant relative of the 1994 Bucke Report). This review seems to have gone the same way as all other Fire Service reviews/reports, i.e. lots of meetings by supposedly important people who make the right noises, who in turn produce lots of papers, followed up by lots more meetings and that is just about it.

But just as you thought it was all over and the Thematic Review consigned to the dustbin of Fire Service history along with all other such reviews/reports, up pops another review, this time enquiring into the leadership of the Fire Service.

Now, logic dictates that this so-called leadership review should be as, if not more, damning than the Thematic Review. After all, it is the present leadership of the Fire Service who is responsible for the state that it is in, as mentioned in the Thematic Review. Therefore it begs the question, why are we wasting time on something that will tell us what we already know and that is the Fire Service is devoid of any real kind of leadership?

It is quite clear that the majority of problems within the Fire Service emanate from poor leadership. It starts with Chief Fire Officers and it permeates throughout the rank structure. This will continue to be so, as long as the present system of recruitment and promotion continues. The notion that someone can join the

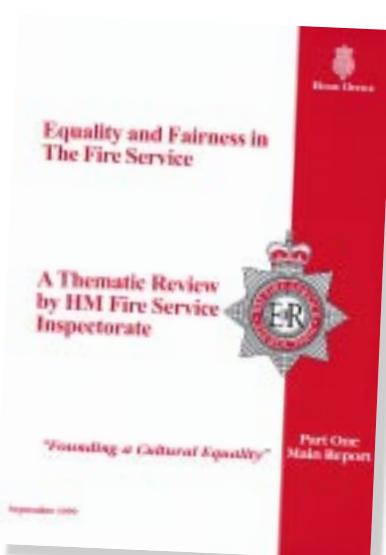
Fire Service without any formal qualifications and by hook or crook, being in the right place at the right time, or by belonging to a secret organisation work his way up to become Chief Officer is ludicrous.

So, how do we bring about real change in the Service? I think we could start by asking, "does the person with overall responsibility for a Brigade have to be a uniform Officer?" I believe as long as the present system, which is self-perpetuating, remains, you will not have true diversity within the Service. At present I cannot foresee a time when there will ever be a black, ethnic or female Chief Officer. If progress is to be made in this area, then I believe we must change the most dominant culture within the Service, that of the Chief Fire Officer.

If it is about managing a Modern Fire Service as we are told, then I would suggest there is a need to look at new concepts and we could start by re-defining the role of a Chief Fire Officer. Of course, existing hierarchy would not welcome anything that threatens their cosy existence. They are prepared to talk about cultural change in the Fire Service as long as it is not theirs. They want fairness, equality, diversity, because they have been told to and then they go through the motions, but in reality, they don't want to change.

This so called leadership Thematic Review is nothing more than a sham; you only have to look at the role CACFOA is playing in it if you needed convincing. This review asking CACFOA (the leaders of the Fire Service) ostensibly to judge themselves, be objective in doing so and then write a report on their performances as leaders. Well, forgive my cynicism, but am I alone in thinking that there is something wrong here?

Are firefighters to take this leadership review seriously and what about the Thematic Review? There are still a large number of Brigades who are clueless as to what they are supposed to do. One thing is clear; if this review is to have any credibility, then CACFOA should not be involved to the extent they are at present and maybe the leadership review is following on too soon after the review.





## INTERNATIONAL



**On 10 October last year Amnesty International delegates witnessed the aftermath of a stone throwing demonstration in Rafah on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip. Sami Fathi Abu Jazzer, aged 11, was declared brain dead after being wounded in the head when Israeli soldiers shot at a crowd of some 400 people, mostly young elementary school children, throwing stones at an Israeli military post. Six others were injured. The delegates concluded that the lives of Israeli soldiers, whose position was heavily fortified and located far away behind two wire fences, were in no imminent danger from the stone throwers.**

# Stop arming Israel, says Amnesty

AS THE Middle East peace process was torn to shreds by rocks, bullets and a rapidly rising death toll, Amnesty International called on the British Government to suspend the export or transfer of components for Israel's attack helicopters.

AI said Israeli forces had used the US supplied helicopter gunships to violate human rights of Palestinians in punitive attacks on civilians, including children, in situations where there was no imminent danger to life.

In 1999, UK export licences were granted for the supply of combat helicopter components to Israel. AI wants Britain to stop any such exports until the Israeli Government demonstrates that they will not be used to commit human rights violations in Israel and the Occupied Territories and in the areas under the control of the Palestinian authority.

"The UK Government must respond to wide public concern at the use of attack helicopters by the Israeli security forces to commit human rights violations during the present intifada," said Kate Allen, director of Amnesty International UK. "The only safe course for our Government is to suspend immediately licences for export of any equipment from this country used to keep Israeli attack helicopters in the air."

Thirty people were reported injured on 12 October when Israeli helicopter gunships fired anti-tank missiles on Ramallah/al-Birch and other West Bank towns and Gaza City and Beit Lahiya in the Gaza Strip. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF)

made clear that the attacks were not aimed at protecting lives, but in response to the killing of two Israeli soldiers by Palestinians at a police station in Ramallah.

On the same day, according to the IDF, helicopter gunships attacked a Palestinian facility in Jericho in response to an arson attack on a synagogue on the edge of the West Bank town. On the same day, there were reports of helicopter attacks on a number of other Palestinian towns.

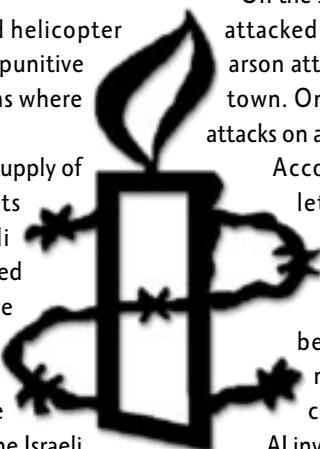
According to international human rights standards, lethal force can be used only if there is imminent danger to life and if force cannot be avoided to protect life.

Since 29 September, more than 120 people have been killed and at least 4,000 injured. The vast majority were Palestinians and at least 30 were children.

AI investigators report that many of the deaths have been due to the excessive use of lethal force by the Israeli security forces, but the organisation has also condemned alleged killings and ill treatment by both Israeli settlers and Palestinians.

AI has reminded the Authorities of their obligations to ensure there is no impunity for those who commit serious human rights abuses and to bring to trial in proceedings, which meet international standards of fairness those suspected of human rights abuses.

**Amnesty International**



## INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION

# Children are the first victims of poverty

**Of the 250 million child workers in the world, 80 million live in Africa. In the West African nation of Burkina Faso, child workers – boys and girls – are found all over the country, too often working under appalling conditions. The International Labour Organisation's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) has launched a programme of action in co-operation with Burkina Faso's Government to cope with the situation.**

**Tor Monsen, ILO Information, Norway, reports.**

OUAGADOUGOU, Burkina Faso – The fact that at the age of 10, Fatoumissatou is helping keep her family alive is not unusual. Like many children her age in Burkina today, Fatoumissatou works here in the nation's capital city, selling fruit and vegetables with her mother and managing to provide not only for herself, but also to partly support her brothers and sisters.

She dreams of going to school, but that is too expensive for her impoverished family. Neither Fatoumissatou nor her family could imagine having that amount of money.

Of the world's 250 million child labourers, Fatoumissatou is not unique. Like many of the children working today in Burkina Faso, she is at a tender age, has no education, works long hours, has no social protection and can count on little social assistance in case of accident or injury. (See graph).

In fact, a recent survey of child workers in Burkina found that some 51 per cent of the children in the country below the age of

18 are working. Most work more than six hours a day, never go to school and often work without pay. In the worst cases, they are exposed to dangers, including dust and explosives. Some must bear heavy loads and operate dangerous machinery. Fourteen per cent of these children are below the age of 10.

Until recently, very little information about child labour was available in Burkina Faso and there was no national programme to deal with the issue. Now the International Labour Organisation (ILO), in collaboration with the Government, is working to change this.

### THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME OF ACTION

The ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) started in 1992 and is today the largest programme against child labour in the world, with some 1,000 projects involving an alliance of 90 countries. The ILO is working with the Government of Burkina Faso to establish a national programme of action against child labour.

In 1997 the ILO conducted a survey among 2,000 children, involving child workers in the agricultural sector, children labouring in particularly risky workplaces such as stone quarries and among young girls in Ouagadougou.

The study found that the main problems underlying child labour in Burkina Faso are widespread poverty and the poor education system. The country is ranked as the world's fourth poorest country. Thirty per cent of all children enter school, but many drop out soon afterwards. Many girls leave school before completing their studies. Only nine per cent of all women in Burkina Faso can read and write.

The country has few natural resources and is economically vulnerable. Burkina Faso depends on human resources as a main development strategy. However, the continuing economic crisis prolongs and aggravates the poverty problem. Much of the population does not have access to basic needs like food, water, health and education. The survey found that 44.5 per cent of the population live below the poverty line.

### CHILDREN ARE VICTIMS

Predictably, children are among the primary victims of growing poverty, often having no choice but to work to help keep their families alive. The national plan against child labour aims at



## CHILD WORKERS IN BURKINA FASO

key numbers from ILO/IPEC survey

Lack social protection	94
Work more than six hours a day	89
Work under extremely hard conditions	85
Lack access to water, toilets or showers	76
Do not go to school	76
Work without pay	70
Work without protective gear	67
Get no training	66
Are exposed to dust, gas and smoke	56
Work in exhausting conditions	54
Regularly carry heavy loads	53
Operate dangerous machinery	32
Are below 10	14

preventing children from starting work at an early age and stopping dangerous and the worst forms of child labour. Conditions for the child workers have to improve, but only as a step towards total elimination of child labour.

The 2,000 children who were involved in ILO/IPEC survey in Burkina Faso will be the first to benefit from the project. First and foremost will be the youngest and most vulnerable and children working in the most dangerous jobs. The project collaborates with various partners to increase its efficiency: parents, local communities, employers and employees, government bodies, NGOs, religious and traditional leaders, doctors, teachers, researchers and journalists.

It is important to keep the public up-to-date on the work against child labour. Every project has its own strategy to raise awareness, especially suited to the different target groups. Debates are encouraged and organised in the local communities and rural areas. Radio broadcasts on facts about child labour can be heard almost on a daily basis in Burkina Faso.

Among the strategies for fighting child labour and reducing overall poverty, micro-credit programmes have been set up to improve many families' access to the means of production. Anti-poverty programmes also encourage many people – especially women – to start small-scale businesses. Public health services must be improved through vaccination campaigns, better family planning and training in basic hygiene. More people need access to education, particularly girls.

**Tor Monsen**  
ILO-Information/Norway

## LETTERS

# THANK YOU TO THE FBU

Dear Firefighter,

I recently retired from Tayside Fire Brigade on ill-health grounds. On retirement I experienced some difficulty in obtaining pension rights and an injury award to which I was entitled. No one seemed to be prepared to help me, except for the Officials of the Fire Brigades Union.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to thank the FBU for its support in winning my Home Office Medical Appeal, with a special thanks to Brothers Jock Munro, Regional Treasurer and Norrie Howard, Brigade Secretary of Tayside. They also showed a genuine concern for my welfare, both at the time and for the future.

I know from my own experience the hours that Union Officials work in their own personal time, for which they never ask credit and I wish the Fire Brigades Union all the best for the future.

**P. Bracken**  
OOT Member

# DEDICATED, DETERMINED

Dear Firefighter,

I would like to write this letter of thanks to Sub Officer Steve McNeil, Derbyshire, who represented me on behalf of the FBU. I am a Retained Sub Officer from a station in Derbyshire and was served with five various charges against me. Steve with his dedication and determination fought my case with me, leading to a verdict of not guilty by a unanimous decision. I would also like to thank Ben Heanue for his time and loyal support and to the FBU for their valued support, as I am sure without them, the verdict would have been different.

Once again I would like to thank Steve and wish him all the best in his retirement.

**Sub Officer D. Astle**

# SUPPORT AND ADVICE

Dear Firefighter,

In February 1996, whilst driving to work, I was hit head-on by a 38-ton articulated lorry. My Brigade colleagues cut me out of my car and I was transferred by helicopter to the Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel.

One of my earliest recollections a week or so after the accident, was a visit by Brother Ray Mooney. He assisted me in completing various forms and inquired if there was any other help I needed.

The Union then swung into action and instructed Thompsons Solicitors on my behalf. Mr. Steve Cottingham of Thompsons constructed my claim for compensation by sending me to various specialists covering all aspects of my injuries and resulting disabilities. These injuries meant my early retirement by the London Fire Brigade. After almost five years the defendants settled out of court.

I would like to thank the FBU for their support during the years since the accident and Mr. Cottingham for his help and advice.

**Bob Shepherd**  
OOT Member

# THEY CAN'T BELIEVE THE CONDITIONS FBU ACHIEVES

Dear Firefighter,

I feel so strongly about this subject, that I just had to put pen to paper. The Fire and Rescue Service here in the Cape – indeed across the whole of South Africa is in an appalling state. Since 1994 the Brigades have been divided and conquered. This is a shameful fact, they endure the most terrible conditions. They have a pot-pourri of appliances, American types and of course the old R.S. Dennis. The condition of these vehicles would have rendered them as scrap in the UK long ago. Health and safety at work! What's that?

I have a good few friends at some of the local stations and when I told them about our conditions and work practices (fought for by the FBU), they just could not believe it. The firefighters are lumped together in one of the municipal unions and therefore they have no voice as such. They no longer have drill sessions and BA drills just do not exist.

I have spoken to the lads about forming their own Union on a similar line as our own FBU. When I finish reading my copy of Firefighter, I give it to Greg Hall, a firefighter at Constantia Fire Station. The magazine then does the rounds. They are very impressed. If any of our readers have any ideas as to how we should go about trying to form a Firefighters' Union, would they please write to me at the address below. Any help from our own FBU would of course be of the greatest assistance.

Mick Harper, with whom I once served with on Red Watch, Barnsley, in the early 70s could probably give us lots of information. I, or should I say we, would be most grateful if you would publish this letter so that as much information as possible can be sent to us. Thank you so much.

I would also like to thank the FBU and all the Officials and members who have been of help to me whilst in the Service.

**Nick Burton**  
OOT – Ex Barnsley Station

Write to: Mr. P.N. Burton, c/o 1 Fairways Appts, 4th Avenue, Fairways 7800, Cape Town, Republic of South Africa.

## MINIMUM WAGE

# Byers publishes Government evidence on minimum wage

THE PAY gap between men and women and the highest and lowest paid has closed since the introduction of the National Minimum Wage, according to Government evidence submitted to the Low Pay Commission – the independent body which recommends the rate at which the NMW should be set.

Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers said between 1.2m and 1.5m people had benefited since it was introduced.

The Government's evidence shows that:

- Effective publicity campaigns and enforcement mean the vast majority of workers are getting their legal entitlement;
- There is no detectable impact from the NMW on the levels of unemployment, average earnings and inflation;
- The strong expansion of the UK economy that began in the first half of 1999 has continued into 2000, particularly in those sectors most affected by the NMW; and
- The NMW supports the Government's strategy of ending poverty pay.

Mr. Byers said: "The National Minimum Wage has been a real success. "It has helped raise the pay of almost one and a half million workers.

"And it has also meant that legitimate businesses cannot be undercut by unscrupulous competitors offering poverty wages.

"This evidence underlines once again that, despite dire warnings before its introduction, the NMW has had no detrimental effects on either the economy or the business sector."

The Government has asked the Low Pay Commission to recommend whether there is a case for increasing the NMW, taking account of earnings and the likely future impact on the economy, employment and training. The Commission will also look again at the case for applying the adult rate to 21 year olds.

The Government has published this evidence and submitted it to the Commission as part of that process. It says that:

- the gender pay gap has closed by 1 per cent;
- the NMW was also partly responsible for stronger growth in average part-time weekly earnings compared to full-time earnings;
- £2.25m of underpayments have been won back for workers since April 1999.

The report adds: "Women are generally disadvantaged in the labour market through lack of equality of opportunity. By setting a wage floor, the NMW is helping to remove the worst excesses of discrimination on the grounds of pay and benefit.

"The NMW has had an impact on the gender pay gap, closing it by one percentage point in the year 1999 to March 2000



JOHN HARVEY/REDFERNS/GETTY IMAGES

**Delegates at the 2000 TUC vote for an increase in the minimum wage**

so that women's average earnings are currently 81% of men's (for full-time workers).

"The latest figures ... show that the gender gap has continued to decrease, with average hourly earnings for women increasing by 3 per cent and for men by 2 per cent."

It adds that, along with other measures including parental leave and lifelong learning, the NMW is a very important part of a larger package of measures that will help women move out of low pay.

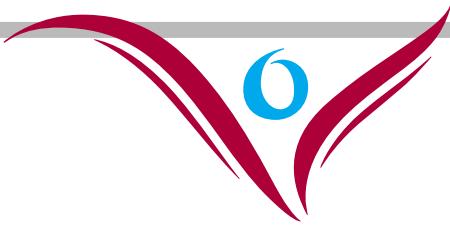
The Government has asked the LPC to continue to monitor the NMW and produce a further report by July 2001. The formal terms of reference which the Commission is currently working under, ask it to:

Continue to monitor and evaluate the impact of the minimum wage; and

Recommend whether there is a case for increasing the main national minimum wage rate and the development rate and if so, by how much and whether there is a case for making any change to the maximum accommodation offset. In reaching views on these matters, the LPC should take into account movements in earnings and the actual and likely future impact on the economy, on employment and on training, with particular attention on the youth labour market. The recommendations on the rates may include a further examination, in the light of fuller evidence, of the case for changing the age at which workers become entitled to the adult rate.

In making its recommendations, the LPC should have regard to the wider economic and social implications; the likely effect on employment and inflation; the impact on the costs and competitiveness of business, particularly the small firms sector; and the potential costs to industry and the Exchequer.

**Department of Trade and Industry**



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For further information please contact Mary Davis, Centre for Trade Union Studies on:  
020 7753 3375 email [m.davis@unl.ac.uk](mailto:m.davis@unl.ac.uk)



#### ON THE MOVE?

*Members are reminded to advise their Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address. Head Office should be advised of any changes of next of kin or nominations for benefits.*

# 25 YEAR BADGES



Brian McCranor receives his 25 year badge from Isle of Wight Brigade Vice Secretary Graham H Jackman at Newport Fire Station



Robin Carter receives his 25 year badge from Isle of Wight Brigade Chair Mark Newland at Newport Fire Station. In attendance are (l to r) Mark Deacon, Dean Haward, Kevin Ellis, Jeff Walls, Bill Gee and Dave Grundy



Geoff White receives his 25 year badge at Warrington Fire Station from Cheshire chair Steve Tottie



Brian Plum receives his 25 year badge at Warrington Fire Station from Cheshire chair Steve Tottie



Dave Lawerance receives his 25 year badge at Widnes Fire Station from Cheshire Vice Chair Tom Caldwell



Mick Sullivan receives his 25 year badge from Essex BGE chair Andy Hull watched by Red Watch at Brentwood, Essex



Dave Chase receives his 25 year badge from Essex BGE chair Andy Hull at Brentwood, Essex



John Bradley Eastern Command (retired) receives his 25 year badge from John Yaxley, London Fire Brigade, Southern Command branch rep



Robert Guy, Green Watch Hainault, London Fire Brigade, receives his 25 year badge from Branch Chair James Wennifer



Bob Stock, HQ Station Suffolk, receives his 25 year badge from Paul Woolstenholme, Brigade Secretary



John Knott receives his 25 year badge from Mark Lingard, Birchwood Branch Secretary, Cheshire



Brian Cowley receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Secretary Tony Carvell, Crosby Branch



Michael Leigh of Red Watch Hainault, London Fire Brigade, receives his 25 year badge from Branch Secretary Ian Leahair



Pete Sellars receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Secretary Steve Robinson-Day at Blidworth Fire Station (moved from Kirkby, Notts in 1988)



## FOURTH NATIONAL WOMEN'S SCHOOL

To be held on

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**MATERNITY RIGHTS**

Pick two workshops that interest you the most

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Andy Gilchrist on his vision of the way forward

And much more

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provided, with a fantastic creche for all ages**

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Ask your FBU rep for an application form or

Contact Head Office on 020 8541 1765